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ORIENT LONGMAN EASY READERS

9 to 11 years

The *Orient Longman Easy Readers* introduce the child to the enchanting world of reading. The value of reading for pleasure and enrichment has been widely recognised by language teachers and this series hopes to motivate children develop the reading habit. The books are carefully graded in seven levels and help the reader progress through successive grades of vocabulary and structure. They are intended for beginners with a vocabulary range of 250–300 words as well as fairly advanced readers who have a vocabulary of 3500–5000 words. The current titles include the classics and also hope to have those that suit modern tastes and interests.

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Orient Longman

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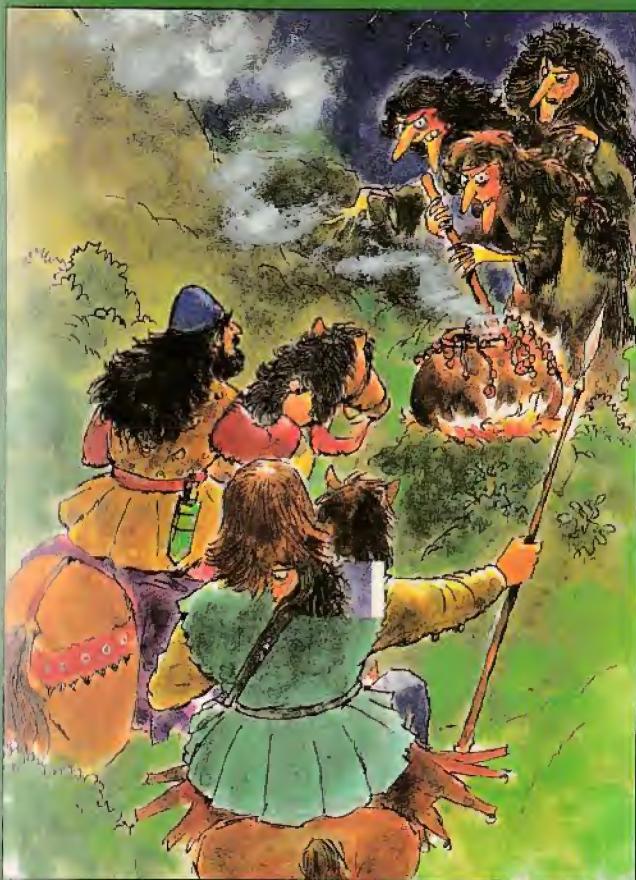
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Orient Longman
EASY
READING



Four Stories
from
Shakespeare

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ORIENT LONGMAN EASY READERS

LEVEL 4

Four Stories from Shakespeare

Retold by

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Orient Longman

A word about readers and reading

Childhood is a time of enchantment as well as innocence. The child's eye transforms even mundane incidents and objects into the contours of a magical landscape; and perhaps the most potent magic of all is created by the miracle of *reading*. Once the child has discovered the intoxication of reading, life cannot remain the same; in fact, this may be the only relic of one's lost childhood that the adult is able to retain to the end, for it allows constant renewal.

It is sad that today media threaten one of the great comforts and privileges of a civilised society—the joy of reading a book. For nothing, no advance in technology, can quite replace the printed book. The child's imagination provides the script, helped by a little 'cueing' from an understanding writer, for the most fantastic as well as moving tales ever created. It is precisely because the book enables the child to unlock the treasure-chest of her or his own imagination that it scores so easily over a predominantly visual medium such as television.

The value of *extensive reading*, or *reading for pleasure*, has been widely recognised by language teachers, particularly teachers of English. It has been proved that children who come from homes where habits of reading are encouraged, develop faster, cognitively as well as linguistically, than children from homes where little reading is done. In fact, in a situation such as ours, where English is only a second language, with restricted use within the community, it is *reading* that can contribute most to successful language learning. Of the many millions of Indian children who spend painful years at school trying to master this language, relatively few succeed; and it can be demonstrated that those who do are the ones who have taught themselves to *read*—independently and widely, and with understanding and pleasure.

It may be said that, on the whole, the teaching of English does not adequately support or foster habits of extensive reading. Very many children read only the prescribed 'reader'. While the textbook, properly used, can be instrumental in the development of many essential *skills* of reading, there are other important skills which can be developed only through extensive (rather than intensive) reading, such as the skill of reading fast in order to acquire an overall understanding of a text. The language learner needs exposure to a wider variety of text types than can be provided through a single prescribed 'reader'. It is also important that learners should be trained to do *sustained* reading, which means reading through a *full-length* book (no matter how short) rather than a truncated excerpt.

FOUR STORIES FROM SHAKESPEARE

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The purpose in introducing extensive reading is to encourage children to read *widely* and *independently*, without having to depend on the teacher's help. Ideally, we should expect a child to read at least four to six books a year. The secret of success in reading is to develop the confidence that the learner *can* read independently. It is possible, however, that many children may not be able to or be willing at first to undertake the effort required and will require guidance by teachers. However, help should be offered, if at all, only as a form of *transition*, with the aim of gradually reducing the learner's dependence on the teacher.

In many schools in our country as well as abroad, every classroom has a *reading corner*, where selected children's books are attractively displayed. Several times a week, there is a *reading hour*, when children are free to pick up any book they like and read without interference. Some of the acronyms created for such activities are USSR (Uninterrupted Sustained Silent Reading) and DEAR (Drop Everything and Read). The benefits of such activities, which allow children to decide what they should be doing during a particular period, go beyond the development of reading skills.

This series, which has already gained wide acceptance over the years, is being re-issued in a more attractive format. Old favourites are being retained, but the range of titles is to be expanded to suit current interests and tastes. Texts have been carefully reviewed; it is intended that while these 'abridgments' should be faithful in spirit to the originals, children should be exposed to writing that is contemporary in style and idiom.

We hope that teachers, learners and their parents will find the new books even more useful and attractive than the ones they replace. The editors and publisher will be grateful for comments and suggestions. Meanwhile, to all young readers: *Happy Reading!*

Bikram K. Das
Series Editor

About the series

The *Orient Longman Easy Readers* aim to help children discover the joy of reading without feeling the constraints of a limited vocabulary. It is an encouraging experience for the child to be able to read what Michael West has called '...an enthralling approximation of the original'. The series tries to open up to readers the world of old classics as well as modern writings, all within their grasp, as the language is simple and controlled.

The books are carefully graded into six levels so that students progress gradually through successive grades with increasing ranges of vocabulary. There are six levels in all beginning with 250-300 headwords in the first level to 3000-4500 head words in level six. In addition to the basic core vocabulary there are topic words, which along with difficult basic words are glossed on the pages in which they occur. The six levels are meant for the age groups five to seven years at level one, and go up to eleven to fourteen years at level six. Apart from lexical control, the books also use a structural grading system that is familiar to the readers. Even within each level, they are linguistically graded.

Although the books are simplified versions of original literary works, every effort has been made to preserve the author's individuality of style and opinion. The series hopes to bring to the readers a well-written story which will motivate them to go on reading and give them an opportunity to increase language awareness so that they will eventually be able to read and respond to the stylistics of unedited texts.

About the book

The four stories in this book are retellings of Shakespeare's most famous plays and represent the four kinds of plays he chiefly wrote. *The Merchant of Venice* (1597) is a comedy; *Julius Caesar* (1599) a history play; *The Tempest*, completed in 1612 is a romance set in mystical surroundings. And *Macbeth* (1605-6) is one of Shakespeare's most powerful tragedies. In *The Merchant of Venice* we see on the one side, the great friendship between Antonio and Bassanio, while on the other the greed of the money-lender, Shylock. However, Shylock's misfortunes are not without sympathy. *Julius Caesar* is a serious tragedy of political rivalries, while *The Tempest* celebrates the beneficial effects of the union of wisdom and power. Prospero, the Duke of Milan is banished to an enchanted island, and Shakespeare, at the height of his poetic powers, creates the magic and enchantment of the island. In *Macbeth* (1606), Shakespeare depicts the tragedy of a man who, led on by others and because of a flaw in his character, falls prey to ambition.

William Shakespeare (1564-1616), poet and playwright is recognised in much of the literary world as one of the greatest dramatists. There is no complete account of his life but it is known that he was born in 1564 in Stratford-on-Avon, and educated at the local Grammar School. According to tradition, he fell into bad company and had to leave his hometown. He went to London probably in 1587. Drama had become very popular and he became an actor and later a very successful playwright. He became a shareholder in the *Globe* and *Blackfriars*, two leading theatres, and his plays brought him wealth and fame. Shakespeare, very much in tune with the theatre of his times wrote for the audience, both the rich and the poor. For theatre was a favourite pastime in those days and the audience interacted with the players. He was acknowledged, even during his lifetime as one of the leading Elizabethan playwrights.

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1 The Merchant of Venice

Long ago, in the city of Venice in Italy, there lived two men, Shylock and Antonio. Both were very rich. Shylock was a Jew and Antonio a Christian. Shylock was a money-lender and Antonio a merchant who was kind and generous and loved to help people who were in trouble. Shylock was greedy and hard-hearted and wanted to make as much money as possible in the shortest time. He lent money at a very high rate of interest and was pitiless in getting it back from borrowers. The people of Venice loved and respected Antonio for his generous nature but hated Shylock for his greed and harshness.

Antonio and Shylock disliked each other very much. Shylock had a special grudge against Antonio because he lent money to people free of interest. This harmed Shylock's money-lending business. Antonio showed his dislike of Shylock openly. Whenever they met in the market-place, he scolded Shylock for being heartless. However, Shylock was a proud man in his own way, and secretly decided to take revenge on Antonio if he got a chance.

Jew: a person belonging to the Hebrew race

interest: money paid for the use of money given as a loan

grudge: feeling of ill will due to an insult or injury

Antonio had a friend called Bassanio who belonged to an old and respected family. He was in some ways Antonio's opposite. While Antonio was a serious, thoughtful man, Bassanio was merry and pleasure-loving. He was ready to spend any amount of money, his own or borrowed, to have a good time. Whenever he wanted money, Bassanio got it from his friend Antonio. In spite of the difference in their characters, they liked each other very much and were close friends.

A time came when Bassanio fell in love and told Antonio about it. The lady, he said, was young, beautiful, rich, clever and charming, yet modest and gentle. He wanted to marry her. Antonio was happy to hear this, but wanted to know what she thought of Bassanio. If Bassanio asked her to marry him, was he sure she would say "Yes"? Bassanio was sure that she loved him too and was eager to marry him. But there was one difficulty. The lady was very rich. The fame of her beauty and wealth had spread far and wide. Rich suitors were coming from far and near to bid for her hand, dressed in grand clothes, and rode magnificent coaches. In comparison, Bassanio appeared like a poor man in tattered clothes. He would like to compete with the others. But where was the

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suitor: a man who wants to marry a particular woman

money? He needed at least three thousand ducats. Could Antonio help?

Antonio felt sorry for his friend, who was hopeful but worried. He was happy that his young friend had the chance of marrying a lovely girl. But he was unhappy because at the time he did not have money to lend Bassanio. All his ships were at sea. But he said he was determined to find the money, somehow. How could he let down his dearest friend in the hour of his need?

Antonio thought long and hard, while Bassanio waited anxiously. He suddenly thought of Shylock, the only man in Venice from whom he could borrow a large sum of money at short notice. But would Shylock help Antonio, of all people, at such a time of real need? He was not sure. Anyway, he would try.

Antonio and Bassanio met Shylock and told him that they had come to ask for a loan. Shylock listened but did not reply at once. Antonio felt he would be willing to lend him the money if the rate of interest was high enough. Antonio said that he would agree to any rate of interest, however high, that Shylock might fix. Even this did not seem to tempt Shylock.

Many things came to Shylock's mind as he listened to Antonio. In those days in Venice, people looked down on Jews. They were forced

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ducats: money used in Italy in the old days

to wear a special kind of dress to show that they were Jewish, not Christian. They were not allowed to practise any trade except money-lending but when they did become money-lenders to earn a living, they were hated for being greedy and cruel. All this made the Jews very angry and bitter.

Shylock turned on Antonio with sudden anger. He said, "Antonio, many times in the past you abused me mercilessly for no cause at all. You called me a Jew, an unbeliever, a dog, a cut-throat. You want me to lend you money? I ask you, has a dog money? Is it possible for a dog to lend you three thousand ducats?"

Antonio replied rudely, "Shylock, I have not come here to ask for a favour. Since you lend money to all, you can lend it to me too. Think of me as an enemy, if you like. If I fail to repay the debt in time, you will be free to do your worst."

Shylock realised that this might be the chance to teach Antonio a lesson. If Antonio failed to return the money, he would be wholly in Shylock's power. But he did not want Antonio to know what was in his mind. "Don't get angry," he said. "I want to be your friend. I'll forget and forgive. I'll give you the money you want. What's more, I'll charge no interest."

Antonio was surprised at the sudden change of manner and even more surprised at Shylock's offer to charge no interest. There was another

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bit of surprise to come. "Do you want the money immediately, Antonio? Let's go to a lawyer and sign an agreement. The lawyer will want to know the terms of the agreement. I have decided to charge no interest, but there has to be some condition. We could think of something that is odd and funny, something no one has thought of before. Suppose we said that if you did not repay the loan by a certain date, I would have a pound of your flesh cut off. That would be very funny indeed." And Shylock laughed at his own suggestion. But neither Antonio nor Bassanio were amused.

"Agreed!" shouted Antonio. "I'll sign the bond with your condition in it."

Bassanio was shocked. He did not trust Shylock, and he was not prepared to put his friend's life in danger for the sake of his love. But somehow Antonio had made up his mind and he would hear of no objections from his friend.

Shylock overheard Bassanio's protest and pretended to be very angry. He said, "If the money is not paid back, what use will the man's flesh be to me? Tell me that. I offered to lend money at no interest out of friendship. I put in the condition so that we could have a little fun together."

Bassanio was not convinced. He still protested. But Antonio ignored his friend's protests and signed the agreement. He took the money from

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bond: an agreement



Shylock and gave it to Bassanio.

The lady for whose sake Bassanio was raising a loan and Antonio risking his life was Portia. With the borrowed money, Bassanio went to visit Portia in Belmont and took his friend Gratiano with him. He dressed splendidly like the other suitors.

All of Portia's suitors had assembled there and each seemed more majestic than the other. All were hopeful of winning the bride. But the bridegroom was to be chosen by means of a test. All of them went through the test hopefully but failed, to Portia's great relief. The man who won the contest was Bassanio.

Once he was sure that Portia really loved him, Bassanio did not hide from her the truth about himself. He confessed that he was not really rich and that if he had deceived her by appearing in borrowed feathers it was only because he loved her very much. She, in turn, spoke to Bassanio of her love and admiration for him. She said it mattered little to her if he was rich or poor, because she loved him for his own sake. She offered him all she had. "Whatever is mine is yours, Bassanio," she said. "I give you everything, along with this ring."

Bassanio, who was overcome by Portia's love, took the ring and swore before everyone never

borrowed feathers: wear something which belongs to someone else
swore: promised

to part with it even for a day, as it was a symbol of their everlasting love for each other.

It looked like a time of matchmaking in Portia's household. Bassanio's companion Gratiano and Portia's maid Nerissa, had met each other, fallen in love and decided to get married. At that moment yet another couple turned up suddenly at Belmont. They were Jessica, Shylock's daughter and her lover Lorenzo, a young Christian from Venice, who was a close friend of Bassanio's. As Shylock regarded Christians as his worst enemies, he had never agreed to his daughter's marriage to her Christian lover. So Jessica and Lorenzo had eloped, taking with them a great deal of money, jewels and also a precious stone which Shylock's wife had given him. When Shylock discovered that he had lost his money, the jewels, his daughter and also the precious stone he became mad with rage and grief.

Suddenly there came news of disaster amidst all the gaiety. There was a letter containing bad news from Antonio. Bassanio told Portia all that he had hidden from her before. He mentioned the debt that Antonio owed Shylock and the pound of flesh which would be cut off from Antonio's body if the debt was not repaid. Bassanio read out Antonio's letter to Portia. His ships, with all their goods, had sunk in a storm

eloped: ran away with a lover to get married

at sea, and if he failed to repay his debt to Shylock, he would lose his life. Antonio said that he wished to meet his dear friend Bassanio at least once before he died. Portia was the first to recover from the shock. She tried to cheer up Bassanio and said that there was really no cause for worry. She had enough gold with which to repay the debt twenty times over and Antonio, who was such a dear friend of Bassanio, should not lose even a hair of his head. Portia suggested that she and Bassanio should get married that very night so that all her property could pass on to Bassanio. He would then have plenty of money of his own to repay his friend's debt.

After the wedding was over both Bassanio and Gratiano, who had also got married, left for Venice to try and save Antonio. When they arrived in Venice Bassanio found that Antonio was already in prison for failing to return the money in time. So he went to Shylock immediately, and offered to repay the whole debt on the spot. To his horror, Shylock refused to take the money. The time for repayment was past, Shylock argued, and Antonio must give up a pound of his flesh, as he had agreed to do in the bond. Bassanio pleaded with Shylock but Shylock refused to change his mind. A day was fixed for the trial, which was to take place before the Duke of Venice. All this made Bassanio very

unhappy. Meanwhile Portia who was alone in Belmont, began to worry about Antonio's fate. Portia was a very clever and bold woman. She decided to go to Venice herself to defend Antonio against Shylock in the coming trial.

Portia had a relative called Bellario who was a lawyer. Bellario would be able to give her the right advice and also lend her the dress worn by lawyers. So she sent him a letter through a messenger. The messenger brought the answer, giving her all the necessary guidance and instructions. Portia lost no time in dressing herself and Nerissa for the part. She put on the gown of a lawyer and Nerissa the gown of a lawyer's clerk.

The two arrived in Venice on the very day of the trial and went straight to the court. The duke had tried to dissuade Shylock from demanding his pound of flesh and to take the money instead, which Bassanio was ready to give. But Shylock was determined to get his pound of flesh at all costs. Everyone felt hopeless and unhappy, for no one knew how to save Antonio.

Just then Portia entered the court-room in her disguise as a lawyer, and handed Bellario's letter to the duke. There was great excitement in the crowded hall. Everyone looked at the handsome young lawyer and some hoped that

dissuade: make someone agree not to do something

there might yet be a miracle. In the letter Bellario had said that as he was ill and could not make the journey to Venice, he had sent a young lawyer friend, Balthazar, who would plead Antonio's case in his place. The duke agreed that Balthazar could plead on behalf of Antonio but doubted whether such a young lawyer had the knowledge and experience to argue a difficult law-suit.

Portia looked round the court and saw Bassanio; but Bassanio could not recognise her. He looked nervous and sad. Antonio was standing beside him; he seemed unconcerned. Then she saw that Shylock, unyielding, merciless, was waiting for a quick verdict. He already had a knife and a pair of scales with him.

The trial began. Portia first addressed Shylock. She said that Shylock had a right, under the laws of Venice, to get what Antonio had promised under the terms of the agreement. That was justice under the law, and it must be upheld.

Then Portia paused for a while and added, in a louder and clearer voice, that apart from justice there was mercy, which was higher than justice. She reminded Shylock that when men prayed

plead: present a case in a law court
 law-suit: a case being decided in a court
 unyielding: not willing to listen
 verdict: decision taken at the end of a trial
 scales: a balance used for weighing things

to God, they prayed not for justice but for mercy. And if in our prayer to God we ask for mercy, the same prayer should teach us to show mercy to others. So Shylock should think again, she said. But Shylock did not respond to Portia's moving appeal. He kept saying curtly, "What has all this to do with the case before the court? I stand for the law."

When Portia saw that Shylock would not change his mind, she asked, "Is Antonio not able to repay the money?" Bassanio at once cried out that he had all the money needed and was prepared to repay the debt, as many times over as Shylock desired. "Then why does Shylock not take the money, and let Antonio go?" Portia asked again.

To this Shylock gave the same curt reply, "I want the pound of flesh; I want no money."

Bassanio was very angry. "What is wrong," he asked the young lawyer, "if you twist the law a little to save a human life?" But Portia answered sternly, "The law is the law, and we must respect it. If anyone breaks the law the interests of the people will suffer."

Portia's answer pleased Shylock very much. For a moment he thought that Portia was on his side and not Antonio's. He began to praise her.

mercy: kindness, forgiveness
twist the law: change the law
sternly: seriously

Portia then said that she had not seen the bond yet, and would like to find out exactly what it said. She read it and then declared, "According to the terms of this agreement, Shylock has the right to ask for a pound of flesh to be cut off nearest Antonio's heart... Be merciful, Shylock," she pleaded once more. "Take the money, and let us tear up the bond. Why must a man die?"

But Shylock stuck to his demand, "By my soul," he said, "I swear that nothing, not even the sweetest words, can persuade me to change my mind. Let me have the law."

"If that is the last word," said Portia, there is nothing anyone can do to save Antonio. He must get ready to have the flesh cut off." Then she turned to Antonio, "Have you anything to say, any last request to make?" Antonio said he had none. He was prepared to meet death calmly.

Portia asked if there was a balance ready to weigh the flesh. She thought she would give Shylock some more time to reconsider, even at this last minute. "Don't you think," she asked him, "you should have a doctor, maybe at your expense, to prevent Antonio from bleeding to death?" Shylock whose secret hope was that Antonio *would* bleed to death, replied, "The agreement does not say that a doctor should be present."

"What of that?" asked Portia. "Even if it is not

stuck to: kept to

there would it not be an act of mercy to have a doctor?"

To all this Shylock still had only one short answer. It was not mentioned in the bond. Since that was Shylock's last word, Portia finally said there was now nothing left to do except to go ahead strictly as the law demanded. There was a hushed silence in the court. Shylock was delighted, "Come, my dear Antonio," he said. "Get ready."

But now came an unexpected turn which took everyone by surprise. As Shylock got ready, Portia turned to him and said, "Wait a little, Shylock. There is something else which I have to say: the bond here speaks of a pound of flesh. It does not say anything about blood. This means that in cutting off the flesh you cannot spill even a single drop of the man's blood. If you do, all your goods and all your land will be taken from you and given to the State of Venice. That is the law."

Shylock could not believe what he had heard. Everybody loudly applauded the skill with which Portia defeated the money-lender's evil design at one stroke and saved Antonio's life.

Shylock saw that he was beaten. When he repeated time and again that he believed in the letter of the law, he did not know that he might

applauded: expressed praise by clapping
evil design: plan to cause harm to someone

fall into his own trap. When he recovered from the shock, Shylock said that if he could not have the pound of flesh, he should at least have three times the money he lent.

"The man shall have nothing except what is written in the agreement. That is what he wanted," she said. Then she turned to Shylock. "Take your pound of flesh. Only remember, no blood may be spilt. There is another thing, Shylock. The agreement says one pound of flesh. So if you cut more than a pound, even by so much as the weight of a single hair, you will again be guilty, and the law will punish you. And this time you will lose not only your property but also your life."

"Is that the law?" asked Shylock in a feeble voice. By now he was very weak; he was trembling.

"Yes, that is the law," was Portia's reply.

"Then, give me back what I lent, no more, and let me go in peace," pleaded Shylock.

Bassanio shouted, "I have the money ready, if he'll take it."

But Portia would not give up. "There is yet more to come, Shylock. You asked for justice, and justice you shall have. The law has not finished with you yet. You plotted to kill a citizen of Venice, which is a crime according to our law.

feeble: weak
plotted: secretly planned



And whenever someone is proved guilty of such a crime, the law gives the duke the power to sentence the man to death, unless he is prepared to go down on his knees before him, and ask for mercy—mercy, not justice.”

At this point the duke spoke. His words were addressed to Shylock. He said, “The law is important, but there are times when mercy is even more important. I will therefore grant you pardon, even before you ask for it. But I will not allow you to keep your property. Half of it will go to the State and half to Antonio, the man you wanted to see dead.” But Antonio, who was looking on silently all this time, said that he did not want any of Shylock’s property for himself. He would like to give it to Shylock’s daughter, Jessica.

Shylock’s misery was now complete. “Please let me go home,” he murmured in a low voice, “I am ill. I’ll sign any agreement you want me to sign. Please let me go.”

The trial was over and Antonio was free. But the lawyer who had argued Antonio’s case so cleverly had to be paid his fee. Both Bassanio and Antonio were very grateful to the young lawyer and Bassanio suggested that he should take as his fee the three thousand ducats that Antonio owed Shylock.

Portia was still in disguise and Bassanio could
pardon: act of forgiving

not recognise her. So Portia thought that there would be no harm in playing a trick on Bassanio. She said she would take no money. "But if you still press me to accept some present from you, let me have your gloves. I like them very much." Bassanio at once took off his gloves, and gave them to the lawyer.

When the gloves were taken off, Portia saw the ring that she had given to Bassanio. "Let me have the ring too," said the lawyer. "I'll wear it for the sake of the love you have for me." Bassanio did not know what to do. He said he was sorry, but the ring was the only thing he could not give away. It was his engagement ring, and he had promised his wife that he would never part with it.

The lawyer pretended that he was greatly displeased at Bassanio's refusal to give him the ring. This hurt both Bassanio and Antonio very much.

"Please, sir," answered Bassanio, "I will give you the costliest ring in Venice, if you will agree not to ask for this one."

But the lawyer insisted, "I'll have that ring or nothing."

Bassanio was unhappy and Antonio was also embarrassed. At last, Antonio persuaded Bassanio to let the lawyer have the ring. Bassanio then reluctantly gave the ring to the

lawyer. He was afraid that Portia would not forgive him when she found that he had given away her precious gift.

It was night when Portia and Nerissa reached Belmont. The moon was shining and in the moonlight everything seemed somehow more beautiful than ever before. Musicians were playing on their instruments and when the two heard the music, Portia remarked to Nerissa, "How much sweeter music sounds by night than by day!"

Soon, Bassanio and Gratiano, followed their wives home along with Antonio. They were happy and they hoped to enjoy themselves to their hearts' content. When they arrived they were received by Portia in her usual cheerful manner. After a while however, there was a quarrel between Gratiano and Nerissa. Gratiano like Bassanio had also given away his ring to the lawyer's clerk, who was no other than Nerissa in disguise.

Soon Portia also 'discovered' that Bassanio's ring was missing from his finger. She said that she was sure that Bassanio had given it to some woman with whom he had fallen in love. Bassanio swore that this was not true. He told Portia that he had been forced to give it to the lawyer who had saved Antonio's life, since the lawyer would take nothing but the ring. He pleaded and argued with Portia for long. "If you had been

there, you yourself would have begged me to give the ring to the lawyer. He saved Antonio from what looked like certain death."

All this made Antonio very unhappy. He felt that he had been the reason for the misunderstanding between Portia and Bassanio. He appealed to Portia

"I can assure you," he said, "Bassanio will never again break a promise given to his wife."

This was the moment Portia had been waiting for. She at once took off her ring and gave it to Antonio saying that he should pass it on to his friend and tell him that in future he should never part with it for any reason.

When they saw the ring, both Antonio and Bassanio were astonished. Portia then told them the whole story. It was some time before they recovered fully from their surprise. As for Bassanio, his admiration for his wife increased even more when he learnt that the lawyer who argued so brilliantly in court was none other than Portia. There was also some very good news from Venice. Portia told Antonio that letters had arrived telling him that the ships which were supposed to have been lost at sea had reached harbour safely. And so all the troubles of the merchant of Venice came to an end in a way that no one could have foreseen.

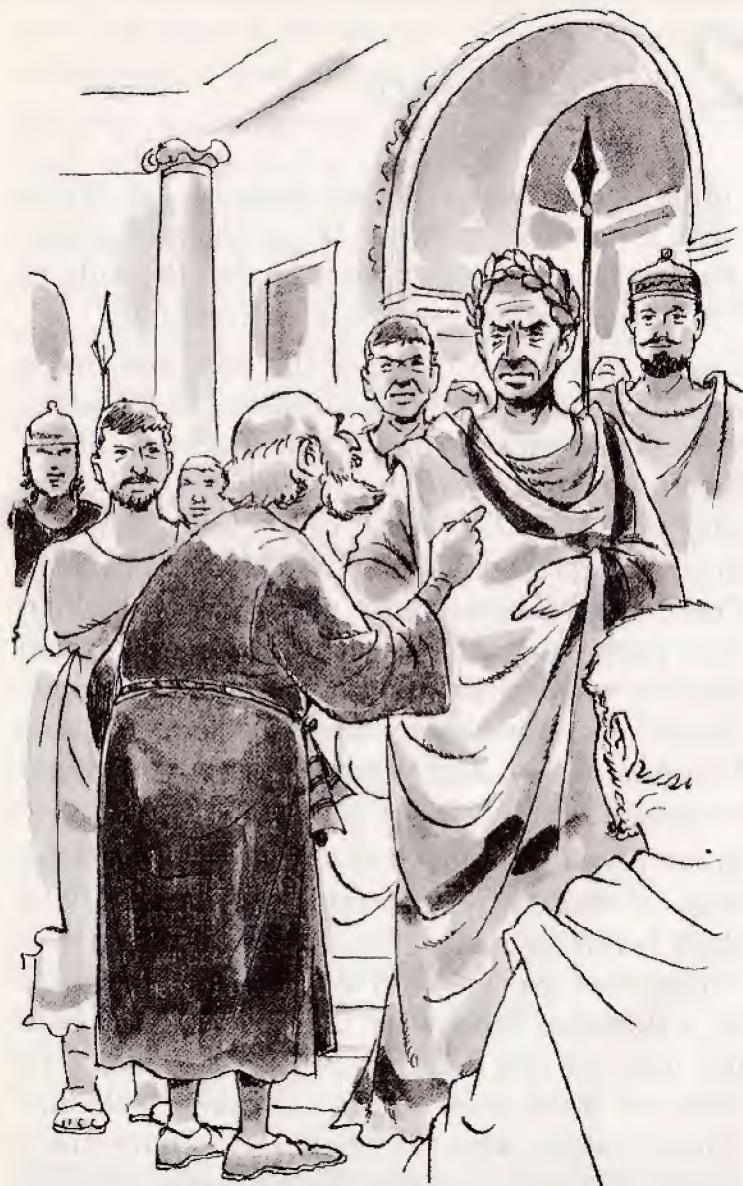
2 Julius Caesar

Julius Caesar was a Roman general, one of the most famous in history. He conquered many countries and brought them under the rule of Rome. In time, he became a popular hero.

Caesar was also a friend of the poor and had a vast following among the masses. But Caesar had his weaknesses, one of which was ambition. He often acted like a dictator and offended those who felt that they were his equals. Some of these men were jealous of his power and glory. There were others whose motives were nobler, who were against him because they suspected that he wanted to become Emperor of Rome. Thus Caesar had many enemies; some of them he knew about and others whom he did not suspect.

Rome was a republic at the time and its affairs were governed by a senate, consisting of the city's leading citizens. They were all proud men who valued freedom and did not like to be ruled by a dictator. Whenever Caesar returned from his wars at the head of a victorious army, he received more than the usual hero's welcome. Some people who watched the celebrations

republic: a state ruled by the people or their elected representatives
senate: a group of people who run the government



feared that the popular adoration might have gone to his head.

The year was 44 B.C. It was the fifteenth of February, the day on which the Romans honoured one of their gods; the festival was called Lupercalia. Julius Caesar was on his way to attend the celebrations together with a large number of his followers and admirers. There were in the procession four important men: Mark Antony, who had fought in Caesar's campaigns; Brutus, who was a leading Senator and trusted friend; Cassius, who once owed his life to Caesar, and Casca whom Caesar had once befriended. Suddenly a fortune-teller pushed his way towards Caesar and called out to him.

"Caesar! Caesar!" he shouted. Caesar turned round in surprise.

"Who is it that shouts my name? This is Caesar, no less. Speak."

"Beware of the Ides of March, Caesar," cried the soothsayer.

Caesar signalled that the man be brought to him. "What did you say?" he asked.

The man repeated the warning, "Beware of the Ides of March. That is what I said." The Ides of March fell on the fifteenth of March; and the

gone to his head: made him proud
fortune-teller: a person who can tell the future
soothsayer: fortune-teller

man was saying that some harm would come to Caesar on that day. "Take the man away," he said angrily. "He's a dreamer. His words have no meaning. Let us pass on."

Only two persons stayed behind, Brutus and Cassius—Brutus, because he had no great love of festivals and Cassius because he wanted to speak to Brutus about a matter that was weighing on his mind. Though he seemed a friend, Cassius was at heart Caesar's enemy. Brutus was Caesar's real friend and wellwisher. But even he sometimes wondered what Caesar's political ambitions might be. Was he secretly hoping to become the Emperor of Rome? If he was, it would be an evil and should be prevented.

Cassius began to speak hesitatingly, for he was not sure whether Brutus could be persuaded to join in a plot that Cassius was already hatching in his mind. As they were talking they heard shouts and cheers from the place where the festival was being held in honour of Caesar.

That gave Cassius the opportunity he had been waiting for, and he began to speak more openly. "I want to talk to you, Brutus; I do not know what others think, but I do not wish to live as a slave to another man."

Brutus said, "What do you mean?" But he was

weighing on his mind: worrying him
hatching: planning

listening and Cassius was quick to see this. He continued, and now spoke boldly. "Caesar is just like you and me, Brutus. In some respects he may even be less of a man. That is the kind of god whom they now want to put on a throne. I can never bow to such a man, Brutus." Cassius realised that Brutus seemed willing to listen. So he tried a little flattery to win him over. "My father used to tell me of a Brutus, perhaps your ancestor, who long ago rose against the tyrant, King Tarquin, drove him out of Rome and restored freedom to the people."

The suggestion in this remark was obvious and Brutus felt uneasy about it. "Enough of that now," Brutus said in a troubled voice, "I'll think it over. I too hate dictatorships, Cassius, and value freedom." But Brutus also loved Caesar and wanted to be loyal to him.

The festival was over and people were returning home. Caesar too was returning home and he seemed displeased about something that had happened at the festival. As he was going past, he suddenly caught sight of Cassius. He remarked to Mark Antony, "You know, I would always like to have well-fed men with plump faces around me. Such men are jolly and trustworthy." Antony laughed at the remark. And Caesar went on, "Now look at that man Cassius, with his lean and hungry look. You cannot trust men like that." Antony nodded in agreement.

Brutus stopped Casca, another senator, who had gone to see the festival, and asked him what had happened. "I have never seen such play-acting before," said Casca. "Caesar was sitting there as if on a throne; Mark Antony offered him the crown three times in the presence of the people, and three times Caesar refused it. And each time I thought he refused it more and more reluctantly. From the way the people shouted it was clear to Caesar that they do not want to see a king in Rome—not even if he was a national hero. When he got up and left he seemed angry and disappointed."

As Brutus listened to Casca's account, his distrust of Caesar increased and he became convinced that Caesar wanted to destroy the republic and become king.

In the days that followed, Cassius, decided on a plan for putting Caesar to death and started collecting a band of followers to help him. However, the man whose help he most wanted was Brutus. Everyone respected Brutus as a man of noble character who desired nothing but the good of the people. If he became the leader of the party, it would be easier to convince the people that Caesar was killed not because of personal jealousy but because he had become a danger to the republic.

To gain Brutus's whole-hearted support, Cassius played a trick. He wrote a large number of letters

and sent them to Brutus as if they had come from different persons. Though the letters were differently worded they all said the same thing. Rome expected Brutus to do his duty in the city's hour of need. He should play his part in getting rid of a man who wanted to destroy the republic and become king. Brutus was wavering, his mind was torn between his love for Caesar and his loyalty to Rome. But the letters convinced him that public opinion was against Caesar. And the only possible leader in this crusade was Brutus.

It was the night before the fateful day, the Ides of March, the day on which some evil was to befall Caesar. Brutus, who had spent sleepless hours in bed, got up well before midnight and wandered into the garden to get some fresh air. His servant brought him yet another of those letters which Cassius had written. Just then, the conspirators headed by Cassius walked stealthily into Brutus's house.

Cassius took Brutus aside to talk to him. But this time it did not take long for him to persuade Brutus to join the conspiracy and also become the leader. Everything was carefully planned. When Decius suggested that Mark Antony, Caesar's close friend and companion, should also be put to death, Cassius at once agreed.

conspirators: people who plan secretly, especially to do wrong against the country

stealthily: quietly

But Brutus cut him short. "We are fighters for liberty, not murderers, Cassius. The danger comes from Caesar, not Mark Antony."

There was one small doubt, however. The place chosen for the murder was the Capitol, where the Senate held its meetings, and the day chosen was the Ides of March. But they had heard that of late Caesar had grown superstitious. What if he stayed at home and did not attend the meeting? Decius one of the Senators said he himself would go to Caesar's house and see to it that Caesar came to the Capitol.

Brutus was now alone. Doubts filled his mind. Was it right? Was it necessary? Was it fair to Caesar? He was stabbing a dear friend in the back. It all left him feeling miserable.

Portia, Brutus's wife, was also worried. She had noticed that some secret thoughts troubled Brutus all the time. She had also overheard him talking in whispers to persons who were strangers. "What is the cause of this restlessness, my dear husband?" she asked. "I'm your wife. I have a right to know."

"There's nothing the matter, Portia," he replied. "You're hiding something from me, Brutus," she persisted. "Something is happening, something which I fear may bring disaster to us all. I may be a woman, but I'm no ordinary woman. I am Brutus's wife. Don't you think I can keep my husband's secret?"

Brutus had no answer to this. "Go in, Portia," he said wearily. "I'll tell you everything later."

Caesar too had an uneasy night and could not sleep well. It seemed to him that there was a great disturbance in the skies and also on earth. His wife, Calpurnia, also seemed greatly troubled when she woke up. She was afraid something terrible might happen to Caesar and begged him not to go out. Despite his own nightmare, Caesar appeared to be somewhat amused at what Calpurnia said. "If the gods want me to die, Calpurnia, who can prevent it?"

Just then some fortune-tellers appeared. They also predicted disaster if Caesar went to the Capitol that day. After some more protests Caesar yielded, though reluctantly. Just then Decius walked in.

"Hail Caesar!" shouted Decius, as soon as he entered. "I've come to escort you to the Senate."

"You've come in good time, my dear Decius, to tell the Senators that I'm not coming to the Capitol today." This was not wholly unexpected. But Decius pretended to be surprised and waited for an explanation. "Just tell them, Decius, I will not come. There are no reasons," Caesar said.

Calpurnia intervened. "Say he is too ill to make the journey, Decius."

escort: accompany
intervened: interrupted

"I cannot tell a lie, Calpurnia. Only people who are afraid tell lies." Caesar said.

"Well spoken, Caesar," cried Decius. "I'll tell them you can't come. But let me have a reason."

"They'll have to be satisfied with that answer, Decius... I will not come... But as we are such good friends, I can tell you the truth. My wife dreamt last night that she saw my statue dripping blood. She thinks it is a sign that some great danger may come to me."

Decius smiled. "The dream could have a very different meaning, Caesar. It could mean that Caesar is a man who would give his life-blood for the glory of his country. This is an opportunity Caesar ought not to miss. The Senate has decided to offer him the crown of Rome—to make him king. Who knows? They may change their minds if you miss the chance."

Caesar, who had never been wholly convinced by his wife's warning, now turned to Calpurnia and said, "You see how foolish your fears are Calpurnia? I was a fool to have listened to you. Give me my robe. I'll go to the Capitol straight-away and shall return a king." Just then many other conspirators came to fetch Caesar. Among them was Brutus.

Then they set out for the Senate. Caesar felt safe with so many friends around him. On the way, Caesar saw the very same fortune-teller

who had earlier warned him that he should beware of the Ides of March. Caesar said to the man in a tone of mockery, "Well, my friend, the Ides of March have come."

"Yes, Caesar," he replied, "but they have not gone. Wait and see."

When the party reached the Capitol, the Senators rose as one man to greet Caesar and Caesar duly took his seat. "We are ready," said Caesar, "to attend to petitions if there are any." Another conspirator, Cimber, whose brother had been banished from Rome, presented a petition, praying that his brother should be pardoned and allowed to return to Rome. This had been arranged previously, to prepare the way for the assassination. Caesar saw no reason to cancel the order. "Your brother was banished according to the law of the land. I see no reason for withdrawing the order." The man immediately went down on his knees. Caesar became impatient and brushed him aside.

Cimber looked around. "Is there no one," he cried, "in this large assembly, who will plead with Caesar on my behalf? My cause is first on the list and I ask only for mercy." At once Brutus and Cassius stepped out and spoke quietly but firmly in his support. "Caesar is strong enough to pardon an exiled senator. Caesar has power;

banished: ordered to leave the country

exile: one who has been driven out of one's own country



he ought to show mercy."

Caesar was somewhat annoyed by this. "I'm surprised, Brutus," he said, "to find you, a dear friend of mine, taking up the cause of my deadly enemy. You know well why the man was exiled." Then suddenly Caesar's temper rose, and he began to speak in a harsh and arrogant tone.

Despite the rebuff, two more conspirators, Cinna and Decius now came up to support Cimber. Caesar refused even to listen to them. "Can't you see," he shouted, "that Brutus himself is pleading in vain? What then shall I say to two such men as you?"

That seemed like a signal for Cassius to act. "Help me!" he shouted and plunged his dagger into the unsuspecting Caesar's body. The rest of the conspirators immediately surrounded Caesar and fell on him from all sides. It all happened so suddenly that there was no time for resistance. Caesar was stunned by the blows that rained on him. As he staggered and fell he looked up for a moment, and there was Brutus among the assailants. At the sight of Brutus he broke down completely and murmured in a feeble voice, "You too, Brutus? You, my dearest friend? Then, why should I live?" With whatever strength was left in him, Caesar covered his face with his robe and collapsed.

rebuff: insult
assailants: attackers

Confusion broke out in the Senate. Some people shouted; others ran here and there; some were too shocked even to move. Mark Antony, seeing what had happened, quietly slipped away, for he feared for his own life. No one was sure why Caesar had been murdered or what the assailants' plans were. Brutus, the leader of the conspirators, immediately took charge of the situation. He tried to calm the other Senators with the assurance that there would be no more killings.

As Brutus and the rest of his friends were leaving, a messenger came from Mark Antony with a note for Brutus. "I love and honour Brutus," it said, "but once I loved and honoured Caesar too. I would like to have permission to meet Brutus, so that I too may know why Caesar had to die."

Cassius, always a better judge of people than Brutus, saw at once that Mark Antony was not to be trusted. But Brutus, took Mark Antony at his word, and gladly promised him protection if he came to see him.

Mark Antony appeared. He did not, however, return Brutus's greeting when he came, for his eyes were on Caesar's dead body. Sorrow rose in his heart, and became uncontrollable.

"Forgive me, my friends," he said, "I was carried away at the sight of Caesar's body. I was only

paying my last homage. I meant no harm to anyone."

"We do not doubt your good faith, Mark Antony," Brutus assured him. "On the contrary, we have the kindest thoughts for you. But wait until I have spoken to the people and explained why Caesar was killed. Then I will be ready to talk to you." At this point Cassius, who had never trusted Mark Antony, broke in. "We have no objection to your praising Caesar, Mark Antony. We only want to know if you are with us or against us?"

"I shook hands with you when I came, didn't I?" answered Mark Antony quickly. "I am, of course, with you. As I said, I am ready to be convinced that Caesar deserved to die."

"I ask only for one thing, Brutus," that I should have your leave to take Caesar's body to the market-place, and as my last homage to a dead leader, deliver the funeral oration."

At this, Cassius's suspicions of Mark Antony were roused once again. "I warn you, Brutus," he declared, "it may be dangerous to allow this man to speak. He might use his powers of oratory to turn the people against us."

"There is no danger, whatever, Cassius. I will myself speak to the people first. I will tell them

homage: respects

oration: speech

the whole truth and put the case before them fairly and frankly."

With the help of another man, Mark Antony then carried Caesar's body to the market-place and put it on a platform for all the people to see. The news of Caesar's assassination had quickly spread through the city and the people began to gather in the market-place to hear Mark Antony's funeral oration. Brutus too would be there in person to explain the reasons for the murder of Caesar.

The people were confused, angry and excited at Caesar's brutal assassination. But Brutus was greatly admired and when he rose to speak the people seemed anxious to listen to what he had to say.

Brutus spoke quietly—without heat or emotion. "I loved Caesar. But I loved Rome more than I loved Caesar. If that is a fault, you should condemn me and... Caesar loved me; so I weep for him. But he was ambitious and wanted to enslave us, and so I killed him—for your sake, for the sake of Rome. Is there anyone here who does not love his country above an individual, however great? If there is such a man in this assembly, let him speak."

When Brutus ended his speech there was at first a hush; then shouts went up. The crowd

enslave: make a slave of someone

yelled, "Caesar was a tyrant! Brutus is our saviour! All honour to him!" Then Brutus remembered that Mark Antony was waiting to speak, so he signalled to the people asking them not to go away.

"Friends," he said. "Please do not go away. There is one more speaker, Mark Antony. Please listen to him. He wants to say a few words in praise of Caesar. After all, Caesar also deserved praise, not only condemnation."

That fine gesture to an opponent was to prove Brutus's undoing. For Mark Antony was a clever politician and a skilled orator, who knew how to sway the feelings of the people. When he got up to speak he knew he faced a hostile crowd. The tide of popular feeling was running strongly against Caesar; the people were in no mood to listen to praises of the dead leader.

Mark Antony began slowly and cautiously, "Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears." It was a clever beginning, for the people at once became quiet. Then he continued after a pause, "I have come to bury Caesar, not to praise him. I have the permission of Brutus and his friends to speak to you. As you know, they are all honourable men." The people were now listening to him attentively. When Mark Antony found that he had won the people's attention,

saviour: a person who saves others from danger

hostile: unfriendly

he started playing on their emotions—at first slowly. Then step by step, passing from one thing to another, he led them, as feeling against the murder grew, to the point where he could throw off his mask, and attack Caesar's enemies openly and fearlessly.

"Brutus has told you that Caesar was ambitious. If that was true it was a serious fault, and Caesar paid for it in full. But when he collected treasure from the people he conquered, he kept nothing for himself; he paid it all into the treasury. Is that ambition? At the feast of Lupercalia you saw with your own eyes how he refused the crown no less than three times when I offered it to him. Does that show that the man was ambitious? Yet Brutus says so, and Brutus is an honourable man, as you all know.

"There was a time not long ago when you loved Caesar dearly, and not without cause. Is there any cause why you should not mourn for him, now that he is no more with us? Yesterday the whole world shook at a single word from Caesar. Today he is lying there dead, and not even the lowliest among us cares to pay him the slightest respect."

It was the turning-point. The mood of the crowd was visibly changing and Mark Antony began to work his way with skill and cunning towards the goal where he now wanted to take the people. "I do not want to wrong Brutus, or any

of his friends. I would rather wrong Caesar, wrong myself, even wrong you, the people of Rome, than wrong such honourable men as Brutus and his friends." At this stage some of the people in the crowd began to murmur against Brutus. Antony had lighted the spark and soon it was to burst into a raging fire.

Now that Antony was clearly master of the situation, he asked them to come near. And when they came he showed them the wounds inflicted on Caesar's body. The people groaned as they saw the wounds. To the anger against the conspirators was now added pity for the dead Caesar. The entire crowd was itching to take revenge for Caesar's murder.

When Brutus and Cassius realised that Rome was up in arms against them they hurriedly left the city. At the same time there entered Rome someone who later became the first of the Roman Emperors. This was Octavius Caesar, Julius Caesar's adopted son and heir. After that events moved very fast. Octavius and Mark Antony joined forces. Once Rome came under their control, they collected their forces and marched out to fight against Brutus and Cassius.

Brutus and Cassius had each an army of their own and had pitched their camps at a place called Sardis in Asia Minor. The two men had differences of opinion as well as personal

clashes, and quarrelled like little children. Brutus had also received news of his wife's death. Portia had killed herself because she could not bear the long separation from her husband. This was a cruel blow for him. Moreover he had not wholly got over the effects of the cold-blooded murder he had committed. All this depressed him.

After yet another heated argument, it was decided—against Cassius's advice—that instead of waiting in Sardis they should move to Philippi in Greece to meet the armies of Octavius and Mark Antony. The night before the march, Brutus found that he could not sleep and took out a book to read. Suddenly the light began to flicker. When he looked up there was Caesar's ghost standing before him. "Who are you?" he asked. "Are you a god, an angel or a devil?"

"I am your evil spirit, Brutus. Look at me well. We will meet again in the battle-field of Philippi." The ghost vanished into thin air but Brutus was badly shaken.

The following morning the two armies set out for Philippi. When at last they reached the plain, the enemy forces were already there. There was at first a half-hearted attempt at peace-making, but the peace talks quickly ended in mutual insults. There was no escape from war. The leaders returned to their armies. Like Brutus, Cassius was depressed. He had

seen warnings of defeat and death. Neither Brutus nor Cassius looked forward to the battle with any hope of victory. They bade each other farewell, and then parted to go back to their posts. There was a last word of cheer from Brutus as they finally separated. "Farewell Cassius," he said. "If we meet again, we shall smile. If we don't, why, this has been a worthy parting."

The battle began with the forces of Brutus fighting those of Octavius, and Cassius's army engaging the army commanded by Mark Antony. The fighting was fierce, with the fortunes of war now favouring one side and now the other. Brutus was getting the better of Octavius, but Cassius suffered defeat at the hands of Mark Antony. At this stage Brutus made a serious blunder. Instead of sending a part of his forces to relieve the hard-pressed Cassius, he stuck to his own side of the battle. The mistake proved disastrous. Cassius wholly misunderstood what was happening and jumped to the conclusion that the war was already lost. He could not bear to see himself being taken prisoner by Mark Antony and killed himself. With his death his army scattered.

At the other end of the battlefield things were going well for Brutus. But strangely enough, there were misgivings in his heart about the

blunder: mistake

hard-pressed: under great pressure

final outcome of the war. As he sat thinking of the past, Caesar's ghost appeared again, and as before, began to speak, "Remember, Brutus," it said, "in Sardis I told you that we would meet at Philippi? Here I am." The ghost disappeared, but the vision stayed in his mind. Brutus had the feeling that he was fighting not only against Octavius but also against Julius Caesar. As Brutus wandered about the field in this gloomy frame of mind, he suddenly saw Cassius's body at the bottom of a hillock, with his own sword pierced through the heart. He remembered the ghost. "Caesar!" he found himself saying, "You are mighty yet! Though dead, your spirit still walks abroad."

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The fight continued. There were still ups and downs in the struggle, with Brutus on top at one moment and Octavius the next, when fresh from his triumph over Cassius, Mark Antony suddenly appeared with his troops. That sealed Brutus's fate. One desperate attempt was made to stop Mark Antony, but it was of no use. Unable to stand the force of the attack many died, while most of the others fled.

Like Cassius, Brutus's mind turned to thoughts of death. "I saw the Caesar's ghost twice—once in Sardis and last night here in Philippi. I know my hour has come, and I must die." So saying

vision: picture, image
sealed: decided

this he ran his sword into himself and died. His last words were to Caesar. "Caesar! Rest in peace," he said. "I was not half as reluctant to kill myself as I was to kill you..."

When Mark Antony saw the body of his enemy, lying dead before him, all trace of hatred left him. Brutus had been a man of fine character. Everyone had loved and respected him. "He was the noblest Roman of them all," he declared. "He might have killed Caesar, but he did so out of love for Rome, and not envy of Caesar. He had in him everything we think of as good, kind, pure and noble."

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3 The Tempest

This is a story of men, magic and monsters and an enchanted island. On this island lived an old man called Prospero, who had a beautiful daughter, Miranda. Prospero knew the art of magic, which he had learnt from books. It was fortunate that he was a magician, for without the help of magic it was not possible to live on that island. There was something strange and mysterious as well as terrifying about the place. Before Prospero came to stay on the island, an ugly old witch called Sycorax had made it her home. She had a son, Caliban, who was half man and half animal, and was as ugly and evil-minded as his mother. With the help of her witchcraft the old woman had cast a spell over the island, and every creature that lived in the place had fallen into her power and become her slave. There was, however, someone in the island who refused to obey her orders, because he hated her. This was a charming little spirit named Ariel. As a punishment, the old witch had imprisoned Ariel in the trunk of a tree. When the witch died, Ariel was still shut up in the tree.

encharmed: magical

mysterious: not easy to understand or explain

imprisoned: put in prison

When Prospero came to the island with his daughter Miranda, he saw at once that the island was enchanted and started to remove the old witch's evil spell. He was able to do this because his magic was more powerful than hers. He first set Ariel free, along with many other spirits who had been imprisoned in the same way. Prospero needed their help. He was good and kind to the half-monster Caliban, whom he found in a wood. He tried to make Caliban more of a man and less of a monster. He taught him how to speak a few words. But Prospero could not teach him to be kind or useful, because Caliban was born evil. So he was employed as a slave to do hard work. But as Caliban was very lazy and would not do his duties properly, Ariel was asked to keep an eye on him. Ariel had a grudge against Caliban because he was the son of his old enemy, the witch Sycorax. Ariel was very strict with Caliban and would not allow him to neglect any of his duties and even took pleasure in teasing Caliban.

Prospero saw that he would have to live on the island for some time. So he built himself a house carved out of a large cave. He divided it into a number of rooms and made it as rich and comfortable as a real home. Here he lived with his daughter Miranda, now fifteen years old,

to keep an eye: to watch someone carefully

carved: cut out

and his faithful servants with Ariel at their head. He read and wandered over the island and took care of his daughter. But he was not really happy for the enchanted island was not his real home. He had once been the ruler of Milan in Italy and in his heart there was a great longing to go back to his own country.

One day, as Prospero and Miranda were looking out towards the sea, they found the sea rocked by a violent storm. Right in the middle of the storm was a large ship that was being tossed about helplessly by the huge waves. The men on board were running here and there in panic, for the ship was in danger of being wrecked. Miranda was horrified by the sight. She felt sorry for the people on board who, she thought, might die. She spoke to her father about the unfortunate people and her own fears for their safety. She reminded him that he was a magician. Could he not use his magic to save the people on board? Prospero assured his daughter that none of the people were going to die; he would take care of that. Then he told her what was really happening. The storm was not a natural one; he himself had created it with his magic and had done so with a purpose. He had, however, taken care to see that none of the people on the ship were hurt in any way. In a short time they would all find their way safely to the island. Miranda was greatly relieved to

hear this. But she could not understand her father's purpose in making an unknown ship run into a storm, and endanger the lives of people whom he might not even know. But Prospero knew well where the ship came from, where it was going and the people in it. When Miranda said that she was still puzzled, Prospero told her the whole story of his past and his relations with some of the people who were on the ship.

Twelve years ago, Prospero had been the Duke of Milan. He had ruled over his people wisely and justly, and his people loved him. But he was very fond of reading and spent a lot of time in his study. So he decided to retire and let his brother Antonio rule Milan. But Antonio was not content to rule the city in the name of his brother. So, with the help of the King of Naples he succeeded in driving Prospero and his little daughter out of the city. He would have killed them both, but he did not dare to, because he was afraid it would enrage the people. Instead he put them on a ship and took them far out into the sea. When they were out of sight, he forced them, the old man and his three-year-old girl, to get into a small boat which had no oars or sails, and left them to drift. He hoped that the boat would sink and they would die. But an official at the court called Gonzalo, who was loyal to Prospero, felt sorry for the duke



and his daughter. He secretly put in the boat some food, water, clothes and also books on magic, which Gonzalo thought might be of use to Prospero.

Prospero and Miranda were all alone on a vast sea. They were at the mercy of the wind and the waves and the bitter cold. But God kept them safe, and so they drifted to the island.

"But Father, tell me why you created this storm and caused such misery to the innocent people who have been caught up in it?" Miranda asked.

"Not all the people on board are innocent, my child," the duke replied. "Among the passengers are my old enemy, the King of Naples, and my treacherous brother Antonio. Both of them, along with many others, are now cast ashore somewhere on this island. They are all safe. But they should be made to pay the price of their wickedness." Saying so, he touched his daughter with his magic wand and made her fall asleep.

Just then, Prospero's faithful servant, the spirit Ariel, appeared to tell him about the storm, and what had happened to the passengers; and Prospero did not want his daughter to hear about it just then. Ariel said that the ship was safe in the harbour and the passengers had been brought ashore. When they saw that the

ship might overturn, they all jumped madly into the sea and swam with all their strength towards the shore. But when they reached land, they had all been separated from one another. Each thought that he was the only one to be saved, and that the others had drowned. Now they were all wandering in groups over the island in great distress, looking for possible survivors.

The King of Naples and Prospero's brother Antonio were searching anxiously for the king's son Ferdinand, half fearing that he was lost, half hoping that he might be alive. Actually, Ferdinand was well and safe, sitting in a corner of the island, mourning the loss of his father. After telling Prospero everything that had happened, and who was where, Ariel suddenly made himself invisible and went back to the spot where he had left Ferdinand. The prince was lonely and tired. Ariel began to sing a song to cheer him up. Ferdinand could only hear a voice but could see no one around. But he listened and as Ariel began to move, he followed the voice as if drawn by its magic.

Prospero had meanwhile awakened his daughter from her sleep and they went and sat under a tree. Suddenly she saw the prince and was struck with wonder. Miranda had never seen a man before, except, of course, her own father.

survivors: people who are still alive after an accident or mishap

"What are you looking at Miranda," asked Prospero?

Miranda answered excitedly "I see a beautiful creature coming towards us, Father. It is so beautiful that it must be a spirit from heaven."

"It is no spirit, my dear girl. It is a human being like you and me... I am old and grey; he is young and handsome. That is why he looks like someone from heaven to you."

"He is very handsome, Father, almost like a god," was all that she could say as she looked steadily at Ferdinand. As for Ferdinand, he too had the same thoughts. He had never seen such a beautiful woman before. It was all so sudden and unexpected that he thought he was on an enchanted island and that Miranda was the goddess.

Prospero had by now realised that Ferdinand and Miranda had fallen in love at first sight. But he wanted to make quite sure that they were really in love, and so planned a trick to play on Ferdinand. He pretended that Ferdinand was really a spy. "You cannot deceive me, young man," he said in an angry voice. "I know you are a spy. You've come here to take this island by force from me. I'll tie you up. You shall drink only sea-water. And shell-fish and dead roots will be your food."

spy: a person, especially an enemy who wants to get secret information

Ferdinand protested. "I'm not a spy. I swear. And I won't submit to your punishment. It will need a much stronger man than you to overpower me." And he drew his sword.

Prospero laughed. "So you think," he said. But actually you are helpless. He waved his magic wand and at once Ferdinand became motionless like a statue, as though fixed to the ground.

Miranda was shocked at these changes. She looked helplessly from one to the other and appealed to her father. "It's not in your nature to be unkind, Father," she said. "What has gone wrong? Look at him, Father. Does he look like a spy? I will guarantee his good behaviour. Have pity on him...and also on me."

Inwardly Prospero felt sad, but outwardly he was as stiff and stern as ever. "Silence, girl!" he shouted. "Don't make me angry by defending a man who has come to seize this island by force. Perhaps you think that there are no more handsome men in the world. You have seen only Caliban. I can assure you, in the wide world outside, there are many who surpass this young man in beauty as much as he surpasses that ugly creature Caliban."

Miranda was silent for a while and then said quietly but firmly. "There may be finer men than him, Father. But I have no desire to see any of them." By now Prospero had no doubts about the state of mind of the two young people. But

he decided to carry his teasing to the very end. "Come on, young man," he said, "you're my prisoner. And you are powerless to disobey me."

Ferdinand followed Prospero meekly, wondering about the strange power that the old man had over him. Maybe the old man would put him in prison. Maybe he would force him to do hard labour. But he would not mind any hardship if he could have a chance to see his lovely daughter just for a while every day.

Just as Ferdinand had feared, Prospero made him do hard work. What was worse, the job had to be finished quickly. But Prospero had also taken care to see that his daughter knew where Ferdinand was and what he was doing.

Ferdinand was a king's son and was not used to hard work. He groaned as he tried to lift heavy logs. Miranda felt sorry for the young prince because she saw him suffer under the strain and also because she loved him. She assured Ferdinand that it was against her father's nature to make even an enemy suffer for very long. But Ferdinand's tasks were so exhausting that at times he felt too tired even to sit up. Watching him at work, Miranda suffered as much in her mind as Ferdinand did in his body. At last she said, "Don't work so hard. You'll kill yourself. My father is now lost in his studies and won't come here for another three hours. Rest for a while." Ferdinand replied that

however tired he might be he had to finish the work given to him before he could even think of resting, or else he might be punished even harder. Miranda then suggested that he could rest and she would work for a while in his place.

"That will make it worse," he said. "You can't even push these logs, let alone lift them. And what will your father say, if he finds that you have taken on yourself the tasks which he gave me as a punishment?"

In this way the conversation between the two young lovers continued. Time passed, and no work was done, but Prospero did not mind. He was not reading in the quiet of his room, as Miranda had thought but was watching them with joy and satisfaction. They could not see him because he had made himself invisible. Ferdinand asked Miranda what her name was and she told him, though her father had forbidden her. Prospero was more pleased than ever when, with the work completely forgotten, they began to talk about themselves and finally about love and marriage. Ferdinand confided to Miranda that he was heir to the throne of Naples and that she would be queen if she married him.

It all ended as Prospero wanted. There was no reason now for him to remain invisible. So he showed himself to the two young lovers and apologised to Ferdinand for all the distress that

he had caused him. He said he knew that it would not take very long for them to fall in love with each other once they met. But he wanted to make quite sure that before they decided to marry they were really in love.

One half of Prospero's work was now over. The daughter of the Duke of Milan was now engaged to the son of the King of Naples. The other half remained to be finished. The rest of the shipwrecked passengers, the King of Naples, Prospero's brother Antonio and the courtier Gonzalo, were all meanwhile wandering in the island, looking desperately for food, water and shelter. They had become very tired and were also frightened by the queer things they saw and the strange noises they heard. They had given up all hope of finding any food when suddenly, from nowhere, a delightful feast appeared before them.

But, just as suddenly, even before they had dipped their spoons into the bowls, the food vanished. They had hardly recovered from their surprise when a spirit began to speak to them about their past misdeeds. It reminded them of Prospero and his infant daughter, and how they had let them adrift in a small boat, hoping that they would die for lack of food and water. Now they had been made to suffer the same kind of misery. When they heard the rebuke coming

from a supernatural being they felt ashamed of themselves. To Ariel (for it was Ariel who was speaking,) it seemed that the men were really sorry at all the suffering they had caused.

Ariel immediately went back to Prospero and told him of all that had happened, and how his enemies now repented their sins. Prospero asked Ariel to bring all the three men to his cave. He started to sing to draw them towards his master's home. The men followed wherever the music led them, wondering where it came from. At last they reached Prospero's cave, where the old man was waiting to receive them. They stared at him in surprise but did not recognise him. Prospero revealed himself to his old friend Gonzalo, called him his saviour and thanked him for his goodness and kindness. Then the other two also recognised Prospero, who they thought had been drowned at sea with his little daughter. Sympathy for Prospero rose in their hearts when they found that like themselves, he had had to face terror, loneliness, starvation and possible death by drowning. The king asked for Prospero's forgiveness and promised that he would give back the dukedom of Milan, which rightly belonged to him. Prospero readily forgave him. Prospero then announced that he had with him a present for the King of Naples that would thrill their hearts.

supernatural: magical force above the laws of nature

When everyone was looking eagerly to see what the present was, Prospero opened the door of his cave. Inside sat Ferdinand and Miranda, quietly playing chess. The glow of love on their faces was visible. Imagine the joy of the father and the son at this wholly unexpected reunion. After greeting his son the king next looked at Miranda. He was astonished, as his son had been. He too asked the same question as the prince had asked: "Is she a goddess?

Ferdinand answered, "She is no more a goddess than you and I are gods, Father. Prospero saved my life and has now given me his daughter. He is a father to me." The king replied, "I could not have made a better choice for you, my boy. If Prospero has a new son, then I too have a new daughter." Then he remembered the injustice Miranda had suffered along with her father. injustice for which he was partly to blame. "How strange it is that I should ask my child for forgiveness," he said.

Prospero, had the last word at this happy gathering, where old enemies had become friends again. He made a fine speech. "Since our troubles are ended, and happy days have begun, let us forget the past," he said. "It's true that we all suffered. But even our mis-fortunes may have had a meaning. If I had not been driven out of Milan, my daughter would not have met Ferdinand. She is now going to be Queen



of Naples. It is a wise and all-knowing God that caused these things to happen. It is to God that we should all give our thanks."

He then told them that their ship was safe in the harbour and that the next morning the ship would sail and he and his daughter would join them on the homeward journey. Meanwhile, they would have a pleasant meal together, and eat such food as the island could provide. When the feast was over and everyone had gone, Prospero called his faithful servant Ariel aside and thanked him for his devoted service and told him that he was now free.

The time had come for Prospero to leave the magic island and return to the ordinary world. So he dug a deep pit in the earth and buried his magic wand and his books. He had won back the dukedom of Milan. His daughter was engaged to the son of the King of Naples. He would now return to his native land and be with the people whom he loved so much. Once he was back, they would celebrate the marriage of his daughter Miranda to Prince Ferdinand in grand style. Prospero had had more than his share of misfortune. But for the rest of his life, it was going to be peace and quiet... When morning came, the ship sailed out of the harbour. Ariel flew overhead to ensure calm seas and favourable winds so that they all had a safe voyage back to Naples.



4 Macbeth

There was once in Scotland a king, whose name was Duncan. He was a fair-minded, kind-hearted man, and an ideal ruler. His subjects loved him, and there was peace and happiness in the land. Once, however, some chieftains in the country rebelled against his rule. To put down the rebellion, the king sent two of his most skilful and trusted commanders, Macbeth and Banquo. Both Macbeth and Banquo owned lands that were controlled by the king. Macbeth who was a close relative of the king was also known as the Lord of Glamis. He was a brave warrior and was held in high honour at the king's court. After Macbeth and Banquo took charge of the king's army, they marched against the rebels and defeated them.

The story begins as the two men were returning fresh from their victory. Their way back lay through one of the wildest and loneliest regions in the country. Macbeth and Banquo were riding through a deserted pass between two hills when they were suddenly stopped by three strange-looking creatures, who looked like old women, except that they had beards. Macbeth and Banquo were sure that the women were

fair-minded: just, not favouring anyone

witches. When the witches began to speak, the two men stopped.

The first of the three witches addressed Macbeth: "Hail! Lord of Glamis." Her voice held him in a spell. Macbeth was surprised that the witches knew who he was.

Then the second witch spoke. "Hail! Lord of Cawdor," she said. Macbeth was startled. He was Lord of Glamis, true, but he was not Lord of Cawdor. Macbeth wondered what this meant.

The third witch had not yet spoken. When at last she spoke, what she said was so startling that Macbeth trembled a little. "All hail, Macbeth!" she called out, and her voice rang out loud and clear. "You'll be king one day!"

This was too much to expect. Macbeth, Lord of Cawdor, perhaps; but King of Scotland? That seemed madness. There was a king on the throne of Scotland, and this king had an heir, who would be king in his turn after his father's death. So how could Macbeth ever be king? It seemed quite impossible. But in those days everyone had faith in the power of witches to look into the future. Naturally Macbeth was curious. Who knew what the future held for him? Though he did not believe at that moment that he could ever be king, he began to wonder if the prophecy could come true.

prophecy: saying what will happen in future

The witches now turned to Banquo. But when they spoke to him, they at first made their prophecy in riddles. "Banquo", they said, not so great as Macbeth, but greater not as happy as Macbeth, but happier." They told Banquo that although he himself would not be king like Macbeth, some day his descendants would rule over the country as kings. After making their startling prophecies, the three witches vanished from sight, leaving the two men shaken and wondering.

As Macbeth and Banquo stood there somewhat dazed, messengers came from King Duncan, bringing them good news. They told Macbeth that the king had already received reports of the defeat of the rebels and was very pleased with Macbeth. In recognition of his services he had made Macbeth the Lord of Cawdor. So the first prophecy had been fulfilled. Macbeth began to believe the witches.

Disturbing thoughts now came into Macbeth's mind. If the first prophecy could come true, what about the second? Would he also become King of Scotland? But he could become king only by removing the present king from his throne by force. That would be an act of treachery, which Macbeth felt sure he could never commit. Macbeth who was at heart a simple, honest man, tried his best not to think of this and he

descendants: someone's children, grand children and their children

was deeply upset that such disloyal thoughts could arise in his mind. In his distress he decided to speak to Banquo. The witches had foretold that Banquo's descendants would be kings of Scotland. Did Banquo believe in the prophecy?

Banquo was a simple and upright person. To him the witches' prophecy was little more than a curiosity, to which he gave not even a second thought. But he was shrewd enough to guess what was passing through Macbeth's mind. Banquo thought for some time, and then replied. "If I tell you that I have begun to hope that my descendants will be kings of Scotland one day, you will begin to hope that you will be King of Scotland now. That is what the witches predicted. I do not like it at all, Macbeth." Then after a pause he added, "The witches have laid a trap for you; I have no doubts about it. But let me warn you, Macbeth, do not fall into that trap. Tell me, how can you, who are not even heir to the king, ever become king—unless...unless you are prepared to remove the present king from the throne? Put the witches and their prediction out of your mind. Let us go home in peace and forget everything."

When Macbeth returned to his castle, he was greatly disturbed in mind. His wife, Lady Macbeth, was waiting for him eagerly. He had already written a letter to her and told her what

the witches had said. He had also informed her that part of the prophecy had already been fulfilled, and that he was now Lord of Cawdor. Lady Macbeth was a strong and ambitious woman. She was thrilled by the thought that she might be Queen of Scotland one day. She had none of the doubts or hesitations that tortured her husband's mind. She knew how to get what she wanted. To her, the present case seemed very simple. If the murder of Duncan was the only way by which Macbeth could become king, then Duncan should be done away with, whatever the risk, and however wicked the deed. She felt impatient with her husband's changing moods. How weak he was! She must give him courage to do the dreadful deed.

Events helped Lady Macbeth in an unexpected way. For just then King Duncan arrived at Macbeth's castle, accompanied by his two sons, Malcolm and Donalbain and a large number of noblemen and servants. The purpose of the king's visit was to honour Macbeth for his success in defeating his enemies. The castle was a quiet and beautiful place. The king was very happy to be in such a lovely place. He was pleased with the honour and affection with which he was received. Lady Macbeth was a charming hostess and gracefully received her royal guest. No one could imagine that she had dark, secret thoughts.

A grand banquet was held in honour of the king that night. There was music and merriment, and everyone ate and drank to their hearts' content. The king was very tired after the journey and went to bed early. As was the custom, two armed guards slept beside him in the state bedroom.

Lady Macbeth had taken care beforehand to see that the king's guards were fully drunk so that they would sleep soundly through the night. She saw that Macbeth was too frightened to kill the king and so she decided that she would put an end to the king's life herself.

Lady Macbeth gathered courage, took a knife in her hand and crept noiselessly into the king's room. There lay Duncan, fast asleep. Lady Macbeth lifted her arm to strike when suddenly she looked at his face. She gasped as she did so—the king seemed to look like her father. To kill him would be like killing her own father. And who could commit such a ghastly crime? Not even Lady Macbeth. She quickly left the room and walked hurriedly away. She did not have the courage to kill the king. But Duncan must die all the same, Lady Macbeth said to herself firmly. Macbeth must be king and she herself must be queen.

But when she met Macbeth she found that he

banquet: a feast, usually for a special occasion
ghastly: horrible

too had made up his mind. He was determined that he would commit no such crime. He argued with Lady Macbeth, he reminded her that Duncan was a relative. He was also his king. As host, it was his moral duty to protect the king and not do him harm. Could one kill an old man sleeping peacefully in his bed, and a king at that? Just rulers like Duncan were the favourites of the gods, and anyone who raised his hand against such godly men would certainly come to grief.

But Lady Macbeth was not to be moved. Nothing mattered to her except the crown. She began to plead and argue. King Duncan was in their power at the moment; it would be very easy to kill him. It would all be over quickly, and the people would soon forget about the king and his death. For the rest of their days, they would enjoy the power and the glory that came with the crown. What would happen if the plot failed, asked Macbeth? Lady Macbeth scoffed at the idea. "We fail?" she said, "never." She had planned the murder with every possible care. They could not fail. Macbeth should feel ashamed if a brave man like him was afraid to do something that a woman dared to do. By now, Macbeth's resistance had all but broken down. He was now almost convinced

come to grief: get into trouble
scoffed: laughed at

that King Duncan should be got out of the way. She reminded Macbeth that the guards were fully drunk and fast asleep. It would be easy to smear their hands and faces with blood and put the blame for the murder on them.

Macbeth took a dagger and walked noiselessly towards the room where Duncan was sleeping. But he was still uneasy in his mind. It was against his nature to betray his king, or murder an innocent and defenceless man. His mind was so confused that it began to play tricks with him. Suddenly, it seemed to him that he saw a dagger in the air, with drops of blood on its blade. He tried to clutch it, but found that it disappeared in his grasp. He felt alarmed. Was he going mad? He walked on like a man in a dream, stole into the room where Duncan slept. Once he was in the room, he knew the task must be finished. There was no turning back. He killed the king with a single thrust of the dagger.

The moment Macbeth saw what he had done he was horrified. As he turned to go, one of the guards laughed in his dream and the other also, murmured in his sleep softly "Murder!" Then both of them woke up and prayed. Macbeth, who stood listening to all this, trembled a little. Something stirred in his mind. By now his mind was in utter confusion. He began to hear voices. He thought he heard a voice say, "Do not sleep.

smear: cover or spread with something

Macbeth has murdered sleep, the sleep of the innocent." After a pause the voice seemed to speak again, more loudly and clearly this time. "Cawdor shall sleep no more, Macbeth shall sleep no more."

At last Macbeth joined his wife who was waiting anxiously. He was still in a daze. When he tried to tell his wife about the awful things he had seen and heard in Duncan's room, he could not even speak clearly. A sudden feeling of guilt swept across his mind. He wished he had not murdered the king. Lady Macbeth, however, was unmoved. She told him not to lose his self-control. He should wash his hands quietly and then go to Duncan's room and leave the dagger in the hands of the sleeping guards. But Macbeth did not have the courage to go back to the scene of the murder. Lady Macbeth then picked up the dagger, carried it to Duncan's room herself and left it there. And before returning she smeared the guard's faces with the king's blood. When she came back, Macbeth was still staring at his bloody hands, and talking to himself like a madman. "Where in all the world is the water that will wash the blood off my hands? The oceans themselves would become red if I so much as dipped my hands in their water."

Lady Macbeth assured her husband that all was well, that there was really no blood on his

hands and that there was nothing to be afraid of. Just then they heard a loud knock on the castle door, which, coming at that time, startled them a little. Macbeth heard the knocking and murmured as he got into bed, "Wake Duncan with your knocking, my man, not me." Then added after a pause, "I wish you really could wake him up. Your knocks are loud enough."

Next morning the murder was discovered. There was anger and panic among the guests in the castle. At one stage Lady Macbeth herself fell down in a dead faint. Macbeth, who had now recovered from the shock, killed the guards as soon as the murder became known. He did this so that the guards could have no chance to speak to anyone and thus cause suspicion to fall on him. When he found that the guests had begun to wonder why Macbeth had killed the guards, he told everyone that such treacherous men should not be allowed to live even for a single moment. When there was general mourning for the king's death, Macbeth and his wife also joined in the mourning and pretended to be overcome with grief. But everyone was not deceived by such hypocrisy. Among them were the king's two sons who had accompanied their father to the castle. They felt that if Macbeth had killed their father, their lives too might be in danger if they stayed any longer. They fled

hypocrisy: false show

the castle as quickly as they could. Malcolm, the elder of the two, went to the court of the King of England, and Donalbain, the younger, went to Ireland.

In a way this helped Macbeth's plans of becoming king, for it meant that while the king was dead, his two heirs had also left the country. The people had to look round for a new king. Their choice fell on Macbeth, the highest ranking noble. The murder was soon forgotten, and Macbeth and his wife were crowned King and Queen of Scotland. Thus Macbeth's ambition of becoming king was at last fulfilled. The witches' prophecy had come true.

The new king and queen lost no time in moving into the royal palace and they set up court in great splendour. But soon they discovered that though, as king and queen, they enjoyed great powers and had every luxury at their command, in their hearts there was neither joy nor peace. They were far from happy.

Moreover, Macbeth found that he could not trust anyone around him. After all, he himself had betrayed the trust the king had in him. More than anybody else he feared and hated his old friend, Banquo who was an honest man. But Macbeth knew that Banquo suspected him of being the real murderer and would never forgive him the disloyalty and the crime.

Macbeth was also jealous of Banquo. The witches had foretold that it was Banquo's children, who would inherit the throne of Scotland one day. It seemed to Macbeth that the only way to end his misery was to get rid of Banquo and his son.

Macbeth decided to hold a royal banquet since that would give him the opportunity to carry out his plans for murdering Banquo and his son. He invited all the noblemen in the kingdom to the banquet. On the appointed day, Banquo was among the first to arrive at the castle with his son. Macbeth welcomed him, and asked him how he proposed to spend the time, since there was still time before the other guests arrived. Banquo said that he and his son wanted to go for a ride in the forest just then, but would, of course, be back in time for the dinner. Now that Macbeth knew about their movements he could easily make his plans for their murder. He engaged two ruffians to kill them at a place where the foul deed could be done in absolute secrecy. At dusk, when Banquo and his son were walking back, the two armed men suddenly attacked them and one of them stabbed and killed Banquo on the spot. Banquo meanwhile was able to warn his son, telling him to run away as fast as he could, as his life was in danger. Taking the warning in time, Banquo's son managed to escape. The murderers were disappointed because they knew that they had

finished only half the task. When Macbeth heard the news, he was greatly annoyed, though there was consolation in the thought that at least Banquo would not trouble him any more. But soon Macbeth's mood changed and his mind was filled with remorse at the thought of Banquo's death, and with gloom at the thought of his son's survival.

The banquet hall shone with lights. The guests arrived and took their seats at the table in order of their ranks. Lady Macbeth greeted everyone warmly. Macbeth too went round and talked with the guests. "The high and mighty in the land were all gathered under his roof at the time," he remarked. "All were there—but one." The guests wondered who this might be, when Macbeth spoke again. "How I wish my good friend Banquo was also present. I miss him very much. Something must have kept him. I only hope that no harm has come his way."

Macbeth had hardly finished speaking when something awful happened. The ghost of the murdered Banquo entered the hall and sat on the royal chair which was reserved for Macbeth. Only Macbeth saw it. None of the guests did.

The sight of the ghost made him gasp with terror. He stood still with his eyes fixed on the ghost. To the queen and all the guests it seemed as though he was looking at an empty chair.

remorse: feeling sorry for doing something wrong



But to Macbeth there was a ghostly figure sitting on it. Macbeth stared at Banquo's ghost, which stared back at him. There was blood on its hair and clothes.

Macbeth then spoke to the ghost in the presence of all the guests. "You cannot say I did it," he said in a shaken voice.

The guests were aghast; they thought that Macbeth had gone out of his mind. But Macbeth's words, as he continued to speak, were full of meaning to those who had their suspicions. The queen was afraid that if Macbeth continued to speak in this way the dreadful secret would be out. She tried to stop him from saying anything further. She reminded him in an anxious whisper of the dagger which he had seen once hanging in the air. She assured him that the ghost was no more real than the dagger. But her assurance had no effect on the king. He continued to stare at the ghost. "Why are you shaking your blood-stained locks at me?" he shouted. He stood there, speaking aloud the thoughts and memories that had lain hidden in his mind, until the ghost at last disappeared. By now the guests were in a panic. Some did not know what to make of Macbeth's strange behaviour, others suspected the worst. In the confusion all that Lady Macbeth could do was to send them away quickly. She told them that

aghast: filled with fear and wonder

this was a kind of sickness that sometimes afflicted the king. The banquet that was to be a grand triumph left the king and queen more disturbed than before.

There was another chieftain, Macduff of whom Macbeth was afraid. He was the Lord of Fife. Macbeth knew that Macduff was a dangerous enemy who would not rest until he saw Macbeth dead. Macbeth had invited Macduff to the banquet, but Macduff had refused, showing thereby that he did not trust Macbeth. How was Macbeth to know who his enemies were, and how was he to destroy them all to ensure his safety? This was the question on which he brooded day and night. At last he decided to consult the witches once again, and find out what the future held for him.

Macbeth found the witches in a cave in a remote part of the country. The witches knew that he was coming to seek their help and had made their preparations to receive him.

When he came, their cauldron was already boiling with its horrid mixture of toads, bats, serpents, the tongue of a dog, the leg of a lizard, the wing of the night-owl, the tooth of a wolf and the finger of a dead child. When everything was ready, there was a burst of thunder, and three unearthly, spirits rose from the cauldron

afflicted: caused trouble or pain

remote: far away

cauldron: a deep, round vessel used for boiling things in

to answer Macbeth's doubts and questions.

The first spirit was in the shape of an armed head, and it called out to Macbeth by name. It told him to beware of Macduff, Lord of Fife. Macbeth thanked the spirit, for his suspicions about Macduff were now confirmed.

Then a second spirit arose. It was in the shape of a blood-stained child. It assured Macbeth that no man born of woman had the power to hurt him. Since every man is born of woman, Macbeth felt sure that no man on earth could do him harm.

The third spirit was also a child; it carried a tree in its hand. It comforted Macbeth by saying that he would never be beaten in battle until Birnam Wood, a forest, moved up with all its trees to Dunsinane castle, Macbeth's strong-hold.

"Thank you!" said Macbeth. "How can the trees in a forest ever move from their place? I am safe and secure from my enemies."

But Macbeth had not finished with the spirits. There was yet another question, more important than any he had asked so far. For he could not forget the promise which the witches had made to Banquo, that his children would one day rule Scotland.

"Tell me, you spirits," he said, "for I am most anxious to know, if Banquo's children will ever reign in Scotland." He waited for an answer in great suspense. But no answer came from the

spirits this time, for the cauldron had suddenly disappeared into the ground below. But there was an answer, and it came in a very ghost-like manner.

The air was filled with the sound of music and eight shadow-kings passed before Macbeth's eyes one after another. Banquo came last in this shadowy picture, bearing a glass in which one could see many more kings to come. Banquo was dripping with blood. He smiled in triumph at Macbeth, and pointed to the long line of kings. Macbeth at once saw that these were the descendants of Banquo, who were destined to rule over Scotland. The spectacle made him furious. He cursed the witches who had started him on the path of evil.

Macbeth's enemies were meanwhile gathering against him in England. The first news that Macbeth got when he returned from his visit to the witches was that Macduff, Lord of Fife, had fled to England to join Malcolm's army.

Macbeth became mad with anger when he heard this. To avenge himself on Macduff he sent a gang of murderers to Macduff's castle at Fife. They butchered not only his innocent wife and little son, but even his most distant relatives. The country was horrified at the wicked murder of a defenceless woman and her

spectacle: something that is wonderful to see
butchered: killed in a cruel manner

child and Macbeth soon lost the support and loyalty of almost all the nobles in the kingdom. Meanwhile, Malcolm and Macduff had built up a powerful army in England and were now marching to Scotland to fight Macbeth. Macbeth's unpopularity was so great that many of his soldiers fled southwards to join Malcom's army, which had now ten thousand men in it.

Macbeth soon realised that everyone was against him, and that he and his wife, who shared his guilt, now stood alone. But he had by now become so indifferent to his fate that he ceased to care who was for him and who against him. He left his palace with his little army and took refuge in his castle at Dunsinane.

Now another misfortune befell Macbeth. As long as Macbeth and his wife were together, they could support each other. But now Macbeth had to go out from time to time and whenever he was out, Lady Macbeth was left alone with her gloomy thoughts.

Lady Macbeth was by nature a strong woman, and by day she could somehow forget the horrible past. But at night, when she was quite alone, things were more difficult to bear. The darkness together with the loneliness made the palace terrifying. She had nightmares and could not sleep, and soon began to walk in her sleep. The burden of guilt became so heavy that she

had to relive and play out the whole tragedy of the king's murder, the very thing she had tried so hard to put out of her mind. At last she died. Many people thought that unable to bear the misery she had killed herself. His wife's death was a great blow to Macbeth. Now he was really alone. No one loved him, no one cared for him.

Macbeth remained in his castle at Dunsinane waiting for his enemies to come. The army, led by Malcolm was marching towards the fortress in great strength. They were supported by many nobles, among them, Macduff, who was waiting to take revenge for the murder of his family. Macbeth got reports of the army's rapid advance and found out that many of his own soldiers had begun to leave him. He was angry, gloomy and indifferent by turns. But he was a warrior and the sight of the enemy roused the fighting spirit in him. He decided that he would fight to the last. He also remembered the witches' prophecy. No one born of woman could hurt him, and he would never be defeated until Birnam Wood came to Dunsinane. Remembering all this put some hope into his sinking heart.

Macbeth was beginning to feel confident once more, when a messenger suddenly appeared with bad news. The messenger said that he was keeping watch on the top of a hill, when to his amazement he saw Birnam Wood beginning to move!

Macbeth at first could not believe this. "Liar!" he shouted, "If what you say is false, I'll hang you on the nearest tree." When the attacking army reached Birnam Wood, Malcolm, thought of a clever plan. He ordered his soldiers to cut down a bough of a tree each and hold it up in front of them to prevent Macbeth from knowing how many men there were in Malcolm's army. But to Macbeth's spies watching from hilltops it seemed as if the whole of Birnam Wood was marching towards Dunsinane.

When the enemy reached the gates of the castle, Macbeth, who was deceived about the strength of his enemy came out to fight in the open and many of his soldiers refused to follow him. But Macbeth was a great soldier; he fought with extraordinary courage and daring. At last he came face to face with Macduff, who had been looking for him everywhere.

Macduff was burning with rage. For a second Macbeth's courage deserted him. He suddenly remembered the witches' warning, "Macbeth! Beware of Macduff!" He would have turned away from Macduff. But Macduff was too quick for him, and blocked his escape. A fierce fight followed and at the height of the struggle, Macbeth suddenly shouted, "You're wasting your time, Macduff. You might as well try to hurt the air with your sword as try to hurt me. I have a charmed life. It has been prophesied that no

man born of woman could defeat me. If you want to live, go away!"

"If that is all, Macbeth," Macduff answered, his voice ringing clear, "be prepared to die. I was not born of woman in the way others are born; I was torn from my mother's womb before my time."

This was an unexpected blow. Macbeth's last hope had gone. He did not want to fight any more. He cried out, "Let no one believe in the prophecies of witches and evil spirits. They are meant to deceive honest people with false hopes and ruin them. I will not fight you, Macduff!"

Macduff, now sure of victory, began to taunt him. If you do not wish to fight, then live! I will put you on show for the monster that you are, with a placard bearing these words—here men may see a tyrant!

The warrior in Macbeth was up again. "Never," he said. "Never will I bow to Malcolm, or let the mob shout curses at me. Even if Birnam Wood comes to Dunsinane, and you are not born of woman, I will still fight on. Don't stop, Macduff, until one of us falls dead."

Finally Macduff overcame Macbeth. He then cut off Macbeth's head and presented it to young Malcolm, who was the lawful heir to the throne of Scotland.

taunt: make fun of someone

Macbeth, who had caused so much terror, was dead at last, and Malcolm was crowned king. The nobles and the common people of the country were relieved to see the end of the reign of blood. Never would they forget Macbeth and the terrible fate that befell him.

Chapter 1

As you read

- A. 1. How did Shylock show his hatred towards Antonio?
2. Why did Bassanio borrow money from Antonio?
3. Who was Portia? How did she help Antonio and Bassanio?
- B. Below is a jumbled summary of *The Merchant of Venice*. Rewrite the story in the right order.
 1. Shylock who was a money lender, was greedy and cruel while Antonio who was a merchant, was kind and generous.
 2. Bassanio who had fallen in love with a rich and beautiful lady needed money for which he approached Antonio.
 3. Shylock and Antonio were totally opposite to each other in nature.
 4. Bassanio, Antonio's friend was merry and pleasure loving and was in need of money all the time.
 5. Antonio, whose ships were at sea and who had no money to help his friend, approached Shylock the money lender.
 6. Shylock lent the money to Antonio on the condition that if he did not return it on time he would have to part with a pound of flesh.
 7. Bassanio won Portia's hand after solving a riddle and passing a test placed before all the suitors.
 8. Antonio agreed to this condition for the sake of his friend.
 9. Shylock pretended to be kind and offered to lend money to Antonio.

10. Portia and Nerissa, disguised as lawyers, went to Venice and saved Antonio's life.

Looking at language

Change these statements into questions.

- a. He will be home soon.
- b. I can't go without them.
- c. The vegetables are not fresh.
- d. Tom felt too lazy to go to school.
- e. Mr. Brown is a good tennis player.

Chapter 2

As you read

1. Who started the plot against Caesar and why?
2. What was the importance of the Ides of March?
3. Why did Brutus get involved in the murder of Caesar?
4. What did Mark Antony want to convey through his speech on Caesar's death? Did he succeed?
5. Briefly describe the events which led to the death of Cassius and Brutus.

Looking at language

Change these sentences into indirect speech.

1. "I'm surprised, Brutus," he said, "to find you, a dear friend of mine, taking up the cause of my deadly enemy."
2. "Forgive me, my friends," he said, "I was carried away by emotion at the sight of dead Caesar's body."
3. Cimber looked around. "Is there no one," he cried

pathetically, "in this large assembly, who will plead with Caesar on my behalf?"

4. "Miranda," said her father, "what are you looking at?"
5. "By my soul," he said, "I swear that nothing, not even the sweetest words, can persuade me to change my mind. Let me have the law."

Developing your reading

What kind of a person do you think Julius Caesar was? Do you think that he deserved to be killed?

Chapter 3

As you read

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1. What was unusual about the island on which Prospero lived?
2. Who was Caliban? Describe him in a few sentences.
3. Who helped Prospero, when he was in danger and how?
4. How did Prospero punish his brother and all those who had tortured him?
5. How did Prospero test the love of Ferdinand for his daughter Miranda?

Looking at language

Rewrite these sentences as directed.

1. This tree is so high that I can't climb it. (rewrite using 'too')
2. The teacher praised the boy. (change the voice)
3. It was cloudy. It did not rain. (combine using 'although')

4. The lady did not like the movie. The gentleman was not pleased with it (Join using 'neither... nor')
5. My dress is less expensive than my friend's. (begin with 'My friend's...')
6. If Rahul does not come we will not go to the play (begin with 'Unless...')

Developing your reading

1. Match the words with their meanings. You can try to find out the meanings by going back to the lesson and trying to guess the meaning in context.

Word	Meaning
enchanted	deeply involved
invisible	something that is hard to believe
inflicted	something that cannot be seen
miracle	caused suffering or pain
engrossed	something wonderful that you do not expect to happen and which cannot be explained
incredible	placed under a magic spell

2. You must have come across the word 'misfortune' in the lesson. 'mis' is a prefix. Find more words which have a prefix. Pick out words with 'mis', 'in' and 'en' as prefixes. What is their function? Do they give a positive, negative or opposite meaning to the word?

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Chapter 4

As you read

1. What was the last prophecy the witches? Why did it disturb Macbeth?
2. What effect did the meeting with the witches have on Banquo? What does this tell you about his character?
3. How did Lady Macbeth react when her husband told her about the witches' prophecy?
4. What part did Lady Macbeth play in the murder of King Duncan?
5. What things made people suspect that Macbeth had killed Duncan?
6. Would you agree that Macbeth was destroyed by his faith in supernatural powers? What are the reasons for your answer.

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Looking at language

Fill in the blanks with the proper form of the words given in brackets:

- a. The people could not bear his _____ (ruthless) and thus fled from the country.
- b. The astrologer's _____ (predict) always turned out to be true.
- c. He could not return home _____ (immediate) as he was stuck in a traffic jam.
- d. He rendered a _____ (beauty) piece of music.
- e. Macduff overpowered Macbeth and emerged _____ (victory)

Developing your reading

Which character in the story *Macbeth* impressed you most and why?